

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
of land in Block F, Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park, London Borough of Hackney, N4**

**NGR: TQ 32251 87387**

**Planning Ref: 2013/3223**

**ASE Project No: 7549**

**Site Code: WDB14**

**ASE Report No: 2016366  
OASIS id: archaeol6-263498**



**By Steve White  
Illustrations by Lauren Gibson**

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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East was commissioned CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Block F, Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park in the London Borough of Hackney between August and December of 2015. The project consisted of the monitoring of the ground works surrounding the demolition of the existing tower blocks and construction of the new development. Modern made ground was observed at ground level of 36m AOD, overlying natural deposits situated at 35m AOD. No archaeological features or deposits of interest were observed.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, were commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological watching brief on Phase 3 (Block F) of the development at Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park, London Borough of Hackney, N4 (Figure 1, NGR.: TQ 32251 87387).

1.1.2 Block F was bound to the north by Woodberry Down, to the east by Kayani Avenue, to the south by Town court path, and to the west by Swan Lane.

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 The British Geological Survey (England and Wales Sheet 256, North London 1994) shows the study site to lie on an area of London Clay.

1.2.2 A geotechnical investigation undertaken on the study site in 2002 comprising 2 boreholes (CgMs 2011), recorded between 1.2m and 1.6m of Made Ground overlying oxidised London Clay. Made ground deposits were deepest in the west.

1.2.3 No buried topsoil or subsoil deposits were recorded in the borehole logs; this evidence suggested that the site had been stripped of overburden prior to previous twentieth century development.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 Planning consent (Planning Ref: 2013/3223) was granted for the demolition of the existing buildings and the erection of up to 3,242 residential units as well as retail and recreational units, public open spaces, parking and improvement works to Seven Sisters Road. As a condition of this consent, a programme of archaeological work is required to preserve, by record, any archaeological remains surviving on the site:

*Condition 11:*

*A) No demolition or development of the relevant phase of the site as set out in the phasing plan within phase 2 shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority.*

*B) No development or demolition of the relevant phase of the site as set out in the phasing plan within phase 2 shall take place other than in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under Part (A).*

*C) The development of the relevant phase of the site as set out in the phasing*

*plan within phase 2 shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under Part (A), and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of the results and archive deposition has been secured.*

*REASON: In order to safeguard any archaeological remains at the site.*

## **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

1.4.1 The specific aims of the watching brief are:

- To define, insofar as possible, the date, character, form and function of any archaeological features observed on site.
- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the footprint of the proposed development and to preserve by record any such remains
- To determine the survival, extent and minimum depth below modern ground level of any such remains
- To determine the nature and significance of any archaeological deposits

## **1.5 Scope of Report**

1.5.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out between August and December 2015 for the groundworks in Block F. This report has been prepared in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2015).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

2.1.1 The following archaeological information is drawn from a previous Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (CgMs 2011). For a complete background please refer to this document.

### **2.2 Prehistoric**

2.2.1 An isolated find dating to the Palaeolithic period was found within Finsbury Park approximately 500m west of the study site (MLO196 TQ 3160 8735).

2.2.2 No evidence dating to the Mesolithic or Neolithic period has been recovered within 1km of the study site.

2.2.3 No evidence dating to the Bronze or Iron Ages has been recovered within 1km of the study site.

2.2.4 It is likely that during the prehistoric periods the study site lay within a dense wooded landscape. The heavy clays at the site would have provided a hostile agrarian environment suggesting early woodland clearance and settlement within the area would have been doubtful.

### **2.3 Roman**

2.3.1 Stamford Hill (A10) which runs north-south c. 2.5km east of the study site follows the line of Ermine Street, the Roman road from London to Lincoln and York (Margary 1955, 170).

2.3.2 It is likely that during this period the study site continued to lie within dense woodland and is therefore considered to have a low archaeological potential for the Roman period.

### **2.4 Anglo-Saxon & Medieval**

2.4.1 During these periods the study site lay in a large expanse of woodland called Hornsey Wood that was gradually cut back for use as grazing land during the medieval period. A possible manor house is recorded on the HER in Finsbury Park forming part of the Brownswood Estate dating to the 12th century (MLO227 TQ 3180 8720).

2.4.2 The study site lay c. 150m east of Green Lanes which is recorded in the HER to date from the medieval period (MLO10073 TQ 3140 8980). The line of Seven Sisters Road, to the east of Green Lanes, is marked on Rocque's map of 1762 and is possibly medieval in origin (MLO10522 TQ 3285 8820).

### **2.5 Post-Medieval & Modern**

- 2.5.1 The New River was built as an artificial waterway in 1613 to supply London with fresh drinking water taken from the River Lee and springs and wells along its course. The New River relied on gravity to allow the water to flow, carefully following the contours of the terrain from Ware into London, and dropping around 8cm per km. By the post-medieval period the site comprised undeveloped agricultural land to the south of the New River and to the east of Green Lanes, as shown on the 1762 Rocque map.
- 2.5.2 Finsbury Park is a mid-19th century public park c. 46 hectares in extent and is designated a Registered Park and Garden (MLO59297 TQ 3175 8750).
- 2.5.3 By 1862 the Seven Sisters Road is shown to the south of the study site, which was still open land, and residential development constructed to the east. Mapping from 1872 shows the site again as open land, now with development to the east and west.
- 2.5.4 Eight residential properties are shown occupying the study site on mapping from 1894-96. The houses are shown with both front and rear gardens. The Revised Ordnance Survey of the 1930's provides clearer detail of the buildings occupying the site at this time.
- 2.5.5 Although the site and the occupying houses received no bomb damage during the Second World War the LCC Bomb Damage Map (1946) shows the site as within an area demarcated for post-war clearance.
- 2.5.6 Only the buildings within the very west of the site survived the post war clearance and can be seen on mapping from 1954 (not reproduced). The east of the site is shown as having undergone extensive renovation, being occupied by Sherwood House and Horston House. The scale and size of the structures can be appreciated as the contemporary Severnake House to the east is still standing and is a five storey structure terraced into the landscape.
- 2.5.7 The landscaping and parking areas of Sherwood and Horston Houses are shown on mapping from 1966 and 1978 (not reproduced). No change to the study site is shown on subsequent mapping but Sherwood House and Horston House were demolished in 2010.

## **2.6 Negative archaeological investigations within the vicinity**

- 2.6.1 An archaeological evaluation at Bearstead Hospital, Lordship Road, Stoke Newington in 1992 recorded natural clay overlain by redeposited clay and a disturbed layer of topsoil and modern mixed rubbish (HER MLO59967 TQ 3270 8690).
- 2.6.2 An archaeological evaluation conducted in 2009 at the Kick Start Site 1, Woodberry Down Estate, Hackney, c. 500m to the south-east of the study site, recorded only the 19th century foundations of a building seen on the 1894 OS map, and two other brick walls that were probably garden wall or the remains of garden features such as a greenhouse or gazebo (HER MLO99496 TQ 32420 87501).



- 2.6.3 An archaeological desk based assessment was undertaken on Land to the West of Skinners Academy, Woodberry Grove, within 100m west of the study site. The site was found to have a low archaeological potential and considered that past truncation would have likely removed any archaeological deposits. The Historic England Archaeological Advisor to Hackney considered no further archaeological work was required at the site.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Fieldwork Methodology**

3.1.1 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of ground reduction works in block F (Figure 2) of the Woodberry Downs development. All works were carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2015), ClfA standards and guidance (2014) and the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service's (GLAAS) Archaeological Guidance Papers (2015).

#### **3.2 Fieldwork Constraints**

3.2.1 Standard constraints while monitoring a large scale demolition and ground reduction exercise with a large amount of construction traffic.

#### **3.3 The Site Archive**

3.3.1 ASE informed the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) before the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated. The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at the LAARC in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	2
No. of files/paper record	10
Digital photos	39

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

#### **4.0 RESULTS** (Figures 2 and 3)

##### **4.1 Groundworks monitoring in Block F**

4.1.1 Site visits occurred between August and December of 2015 to monitor the works undertaken for the demolition of the old tower blocks and the ground reduction around them.

4.1.2 The first area observed was the eastern half of Block F, as the eastern most tower block (adjacent to Kayani Avenue) was the first to be demolished. The total ground reduction in this area was initially to a depth of 2.00m below ground level (c.34m AOD), with further reduction in certain discrete areas another metre. Over the course of the next 4 months ground reduction was observed across the entirety of Block F.

4.1.3 The earliest deposit observed was natural London Clay [02], encountered at c 35m AOD. This was overlain across the entire site by modern made ground [01] comprising a terracing and construction deposit. This was observed at ground level of c. 36m AOD.

4.1.4 No archaeological features, finds or deposits of interest were observed.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Max. Length m</b>	<b>Max. Width m</b>	<b>Deposit Thickness m</b>
01	Layer	Made ground	Area	Area	0.50-1.00
02	Layer	Natural geology	Area	Area	>2.00

Table 2: List of recorded contexts

## **5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Stratigraphic Sequence and survival**

- 5.1.1 No archaeological features or finds of any significance were observed during the watching brief exercise.
- 5.1.2 The earliest deposit was natural London clay [2], observed at c. 35m AOD and was at least 2.00m thick.
- 5.1.3 It seems likely that 20<sup>th</sup> century activity, such as terracing and land-forming, has had a wide ranging effect on the topography of the area.

### **5.2 Conclusions and considerations of research aims**

- 5.2.1 To define, insofar as possible, the date, character, form and function of any archaeological features observed on site.

*No archaeological features were observed on site.*

- 5.2.2 To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the footprint of the proposed development and to preserve by record any such remains.

*No archaeological remains were observed within the footprint of the development of Block F.*

- 5.2.3 To determine the survival, extent and minimum depth below modern ground level of any such remains.

*Natural deposits were observed c. 1.00m below ground level. No archaeological remains were observed. 20<sup>th</sup> century terracing and construction activity had likely truncated the upper horizon of the natural London Clay, as such existing impacts would have had a negative effect on the survival of any archaeological remains had they been present.*

- 5.2.4 To determine the nature and significance of any archaeological deposits.

*Natural London clay was observed c. 1.00m below ground level, sealed by made ground. As suggested above the natural and archaeological horizon had likely been truncated to some degree and no archaeological remains were found to be present.*

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

ASE 2015. *Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park, London Borough of Hackney, N4: Archaeological Watching Brief for Phase 3, Blocks B&D Written Scheme of Investigation*

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ASE would like to thank CgMs consulting for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project, and GLAAS for their guidance and monitoring. The watching brief was undertaken by Steve White with Sarah Ritchie providing secondary supervisory cover. Lauren Gibson produced the figures for this report; Andy Leonard managed the watching brief and Jim Stevenson and Andy Margetts the post-excavation process.

**HER Summary Form**

Site Code	WDB14				
Identification Name and Address	Block F, Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park, N4				
County, District &/or Borough	Hackney				
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 32251 87387				
Geology	London Clay				
Arch. South-East Project Number	7549				
Type of Fieldwork			Watching Brief		
Type of Site		Shallow Urban			
Dates of Fieldwork			WB. 5/08/2015 - 15/12/2015		
Sponsor/Client	CgMs Consulting				
Project Manager	Andy Leonard				
Project Supervisor	Steve White				
Period Summary					
					Modern
<p>Summary</p> <p><i>Archaeology South-East was commissioned CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Block F, Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park in the London Borough of Hackney between August and December of 2015. The project consisted of the monitoring of the ground works surrounding the demolition of the existing tower blocks and construction of the new development. Modern made ground was observed at ground level of 36m AOD, overlying natural deposits situated at 35m AOD. No archaeological features or deposits of interest were observed.</i></p>					

## OASIS Form

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-263498**

### Project details

Project name	Block F, Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park, N4
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East was commissioned CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Block F, Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park in the London Borough of between August and December of 2016. The project consisted of the monitoring of the ground works surrounding the demolition of the existing tower blocks and construction of the new development. Modern made ground was observed at ground level of 36m AOD, overlying natural deposits situated at 35m AOD. No archaeological features or deposits of interest were observed.
Project dates	Start: 05-08-2015 End: 15-12-2015
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	WDB14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Methods & techniques	"Visual Inspection"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

#### **Project location**

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY Block F, Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park, N4
Postcode	N4
Study area	2.4 Hectares
Site coordinates	TQ 32251 87387 51.569332263236 -0.09155469157 51 34 09 N 000 05 29 W Polygon
Height OD / Depth	Min: 33m Max: 35m

#### **Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	CgMs Consulting
Project design originator	CgMs Consulting
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Steve White
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	CgMs consulting

#### **Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists?	No
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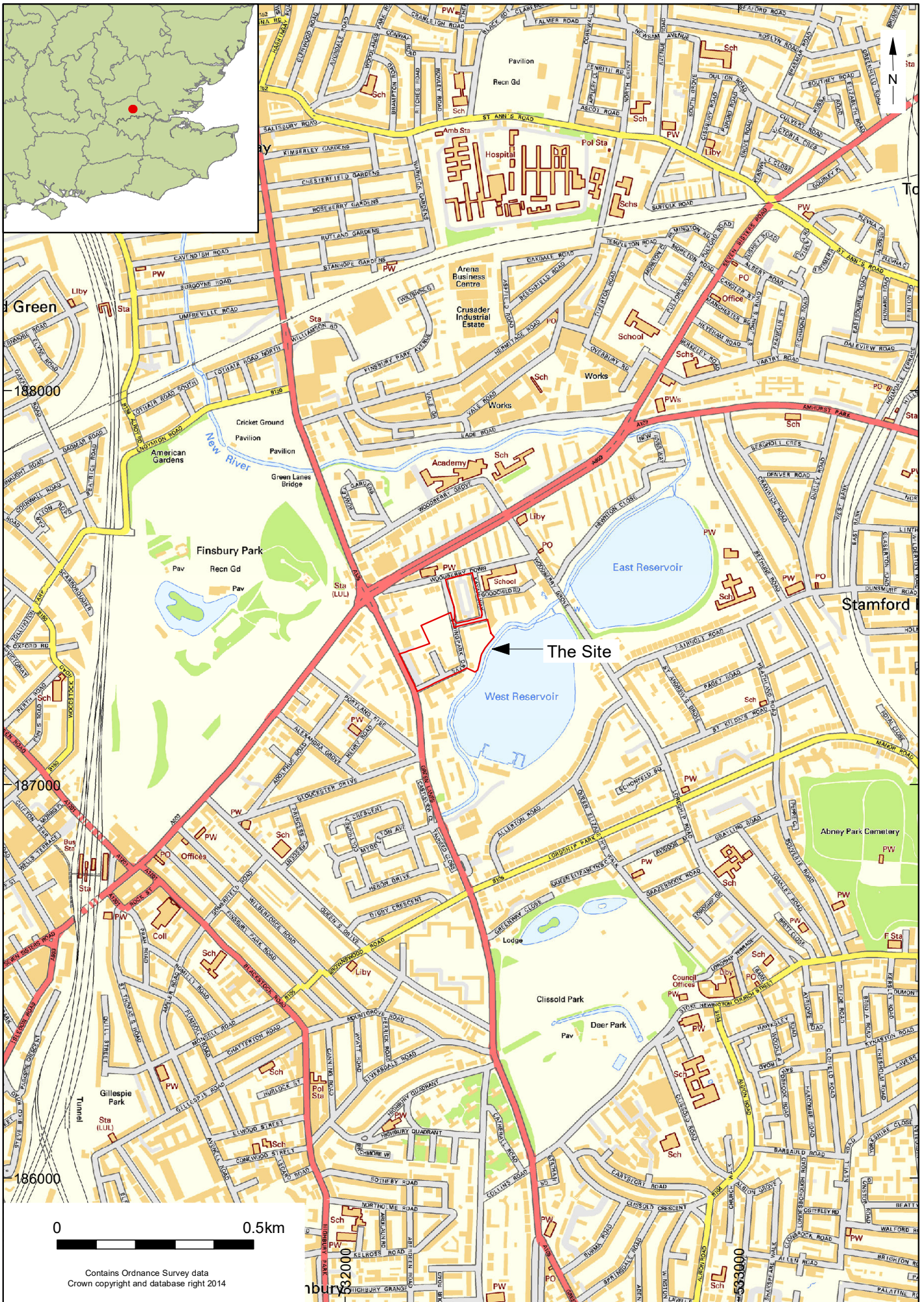
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	WDB14
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic","Survey"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	WDB14
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic","Survey"
Paper Media available	"Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes","Section"

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**Project bibliography 1**

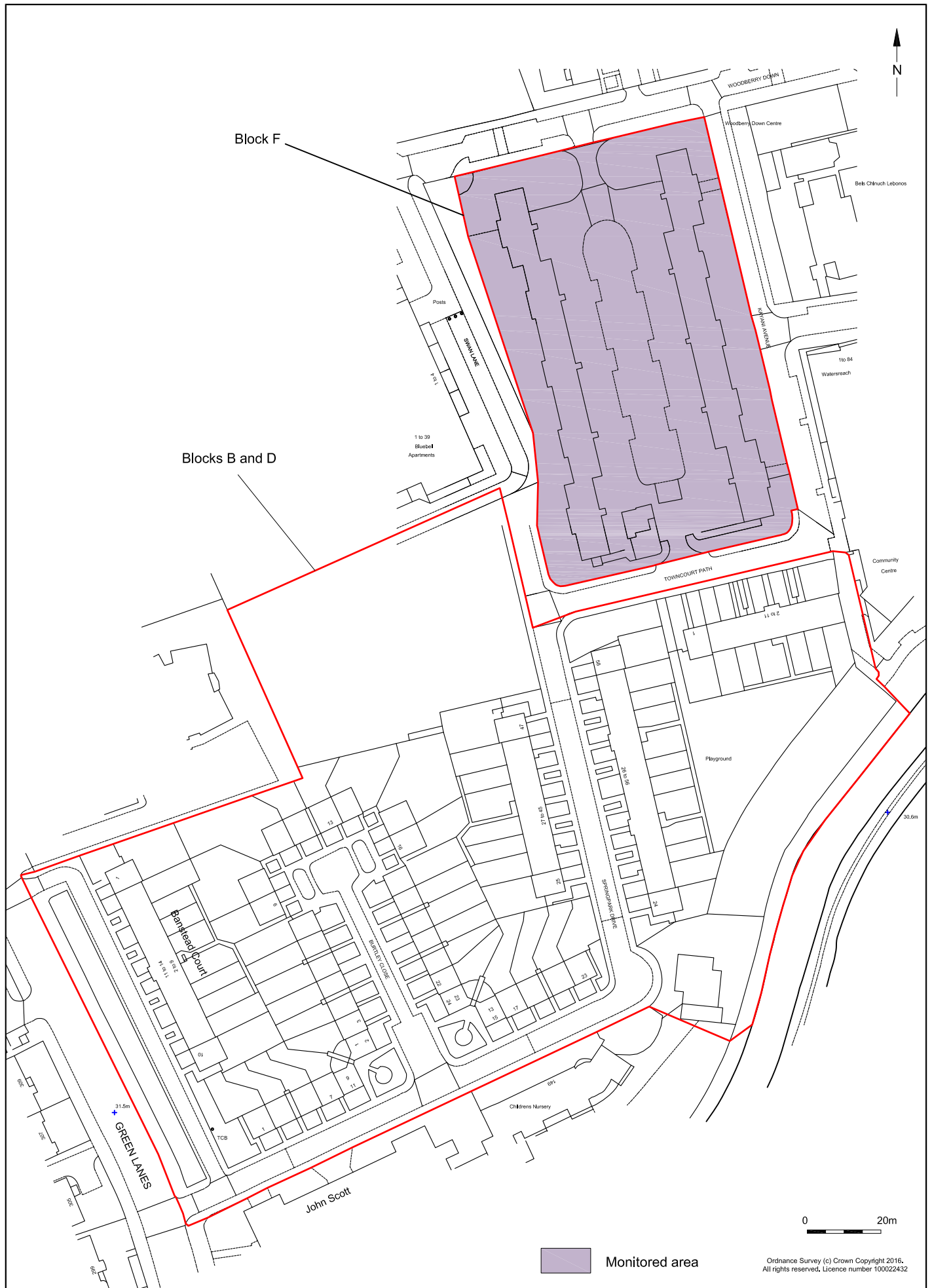
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Project Ref: 7549	October 2016	Site location	
Report Ref: 2016366	Drawn by: LG	Fig. 1	



© Archaeology South-East		Woodberry Down Phase 3, Hackney		Fig.2
Project Ref: 7549	October 2016	Block F location		
Report Ref: 2016366	Drawn by: LG			



View north-west into block F



View south into block F



View south through block F



View south-west into block F

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